
Everyone counts - People with disabilities

People with disabilities form a large part of the Australian community so it is important that the Census of Population and Housing, to be held on 8 August, reflects this.

The Census, held every five years, provides us with the best available snapshot of Australia and Australians. It not only counts our population, but helps us to define who we are as Australians.

The Census is also an essential tool in planning for the needs of the community. This includes forward planning by all three spheres of government and is therefore important to those with disabilities - and everyone else in Australia. It is used to determine, for example, where schools and hospitals and special care facilities will be built.

The 2006 Census will include questions to identify people who need assistance due to a "profound or severe core activity limitation". The questions are based on similar criteria to the ABS Survey of Disability, Aging and Carers. This population is defined as people with a disability who need assistance in their day-to-day lives with any or all of the following core activities: self care, body movements or communication.

The results of the 2003 ABS Survey of Disability, Aging and Carers showed that one in five Australians - 20 per cent of the population, or 3.96 million people - had a disability. Like all Australians, this significant group has a chance to have a say through the Census.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is committed to communicating Census information effectively to people with a disability and to minimising any barriers they might have in filling out the their form on Tuesday 8th August. For example:

- The ABS encourages people who need help to enlist the assistance of others they trust, such as a family member, friend, carer or neighbour.
- Census assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Telephone Typewriter Service (TTY) number 1300 364 365 from 28 July 2006.
- A large print version of the Census Guide is available from the ABS web site at www.abs.gov.au.
- Organisations for people with disabilities, and carers' groups, are encouraged to help spread the word about the Census and to help wherever possible.
- Special Collectors will be recruited to enumerate people in hospitals, nursing homes, retirement villages and other retirement establishments and hostels.

For the first time, people will have the option of filling in the 2006 Census on-line via the ABS web site (eCensus). The design of the eCensus form takes into account accepted accessibility standards as set out by the World Wide Web Consortium. The form is also compatible with commonly used screenreader programs such as Jaws© and Window Eyes©.

In the course of designing the eCensus form, the ABS consulted organisations such as Vision Australia, the National Information Library Service and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, to ensure that the broadest range of people would be able to access the eCensus form from their home computers.

People with a visual impairment can obtain their Census Form Number and an eCensus number in alternative formats, to enable them to complete the form securely online. To do this, they will need to contact the Census Inquiry Service hotline on 1300 362 883 or talk to the Collector and request these numbers be delivered in Braille or large print, or relayed verbally.

Details of the study are in **Disability, Ageing and Carers** (cat. no. 4430.0), available from ABS bookshops in all capital cities. The publication is also available on the Disability, Ageing and Caring Theme Page at the ABS web site, <www.abs.gov.au>.